

met with the species in the same class of country about 70 miles further west, at Kow Plains, during October, 1909, but were unable to secure specimens. In September, 1910, our party was made up of Messrs. J. A. Ross, A. Mattingley, C. F. Cole, and myself. We reached the Mallee on 4th September, but it was not until the 9th that we found the birds, as usual in the porcupine, on a sand-ridge bordering the Kow Plains road, about 38 miles from Ouyen. We saw them all through the spinifex. I saw what I took to be a female fly from a porcupine bush, and as I discharged my gun a male rose to join the female, which was riddled with the shot; the male, however, was perfect.

Mr. Campbell says that this bird is much smaller than *S. malachurus*, and on measuring my specimen in the flesh I made the dimensions (in inches) as follows:—Total length, exactly 5 inches; culmen,  $\frac{5}{16}$ ; wing,  $1\frac{3}{8}$ ; tail,  $2\frac{3}{4}$ ; tarsus,  $\frac{5}{8}$ . We were unable to secure a specimen of the still undescribed female. Since leaving the locality I have secured a set of three fresh eggs, taken on 18th September, at Underbool, by Messrs. Geo. Dunn and F. Estick.

*Description of Nest.*—Oval in shape, with the entrance at the side, the opening having the top built out and forming a verandah; outwardly composed of very fine shreds of bark, soft and light-coloured grasses, and the down of thistles and flowering shrubs, and decorated here and there with a few spiders' cocoons. Interior lined with feathers and fur. The nest was placed in the heart of a bunch of porcupine grass (*Triodia*). Dimensions:—Length, 5 inches; breadth, 3 inches; opening, 2 inches long by  $1\frac{1}{4}$  inches wide; interior, level with opening to bottom, 1 inch.

*Description of Eggs.*—Clutch three, oval in shape; texture of shell very fine; surface slightly glossy; colour white, with a pinkish tinge, and moderately blotched or spotted all over with reddish-brown or rufous. The markings are thickest about the larger end, where they form a zone. Dimensions in inches:—(a) .58 x .44, (b) .58 x .44, (c) .56 x .42.

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### Annotations.

By A. J. CAMPBELL, C.M.B.O.U., MELBOURNE.

(Published in "Bulletin No. 2" of the R.A.O.U., 21/2/11.)

CRATICUS MENTALIS (Black-backed Butcher-Bird). — Through the enterprise of Mr. H. L. White, New South Wales, and the energy of Mr. Harry Barnard, Queensland, this New Guinea species is now established as an Australian bird also. Mr. Barnard observed several of these birds at Lockerbie, Cape York, and discovered a pair breeding. 1/12/10. Mr. White describes these eggs in the next article.

In the "Catalogue of Birds" \* (British Museum) *C. spaldingi* †

\* Vol. viii., p. 102.

† "Proc. Linn. Soc. N.S.W.," vol. ii., p. 271 (1877).

(Masters) is indicated as synonymous with *C. mentalis* (Salvadori). At the time I wrote "Nests and Eggs" Mr. Masters' original description was not accessible to me, therefore I accepted the official "catalogue" as being correct, with the qualification—"If *C. mentalis* be really an Australian species, it is somewhat strange it has not been recorded for North Queensland, as it is found on the opposite coast of New Guinea" ("Nests and Eggs," p. 306).

*C. mentalis* is a small Butcher-Bird (about 10 inches total length), and is black and white, similar to *C. argentus* of North-West Australia, but having a black back instead of silvery-grey, whereas *C. spaldingi* is larger (14 inches), and black, resembling *C. quoyi* (Lesson). While regretting I inadvertently overlooked Mr. Masters' new sub-species, I apparently strayed in very good company, for Dr. E. Hartert (whose critical work on Australian birds is much appreciated by students here) also missed the same reference, or else he would probably not have created his sub-species *C. quoyi tunneyi*\* from the type locality of *C. spaldingi*, the birds being apparently alike.

STRANGE HALCYON. — Another of Mr. Harry Barnard's interesting discoveries in the rich region of Cape York has been an apparently new Kingfisher, which nearest resembles *Halcyon macleayi*, but is different owing to its darker-coloured head and the absence of the conspicuous white bars on the wings.

On 6/11/10 Mr. Barnard observed a pair breeding, and secured the male bird, which may be described as follows:—

Ear-coverts black; head and nape bluish-black, or black with a wash of Prussian blue; wings brownish-black; primaries edged with brilliant ultramarine blue, secondaries and coverts washed with the same colour; upper back and tail coverts also brilliant ultramarine blue; mantle and lower back (rump) a beautiful shade of verditer-blue or metallic cœrulean blue, the ultramarine of the upper back blending with the verditer-blue of the mantle; spot before the eye, broad collar (hind-neck), and all under surface white, except lower flanks, which are slightly tinged with buff; tail brownish-black, upper surface washed with Prussian blue.

Iris dark brown; bill black, except base of lower mandible, which is white; tarsus brown (Barnard).

Length,  $7\frac{1}{2}$ ; wing,  $3\frac{3}{8}$ ; tail,  $2\frac{1}{2}$ ; culmen,  $1\frac{3}{8}$ ; tarsus,  $\frac{1}{2}$  inches.

*Habitat.*—Lockerbie, Cape York.

At present the type is solitary, but should more examples prove the foregoing description to be constant, no doubt ornithologists will readily agree that the bird be named the Barnard Kingfisher (*Halcyon barnardi*), after its discoverer, Mr. H. G. Barnard—one of the Barnards of "Coomooboolaroo" fame.

Mr. H. L. White describes the eggs in the following article.

\* "Nov. Zool.," vol. xii., p. 228 (1905).

PLATYCERCUS AMATHUSIA (Blue-cheeked Parrakeet).—Amongst the collection of Cape York skins made by Mr. Barnard, and kindly loaned by Mr. White, is a series of this beautiful yellow-headed Parrot. As Gould states, it is nearly allied to the paler-headed *P. pallidiceps*, but differs in “the greener tone of the colouring of the body and in the rich blue cheeks.” However, the blue upon the cheeks is variable in the specimens under notice, there being more or less white on the upper part of the cheek. This variability is apparently due to age, because in two specimens (♂ and ♀), evidently immature, the cheeks are almost wholly blue, while there are patches of red feathers upon the head.

Regarding the fine black-headed *P. browni* (*venustus*), recently collected by Mr. G. F. Hill, and mentioned in his notes in the last issue of *The Emu*, p. 270, Mr. Gregory M. Mathews has created for it a new sub-species—*P. venustus hilli*\*—partly because the white feathers of the cheeks are “reduced to a narrow line, the blue spreading nearly all the way up to the black below the eyes.” In some specimens (Hill’s) I have examined the extent of the white patch is variable, even on the same bird, one skin showing a larger patch of white on one cheek than on the other; also, like *P. amathusia*, *P. browni* has red feathers occasionally on the head. I fear Mr. Mathews’ new sub-species is not admissible.

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## Descriptions of New Eggs.

By H. L. WHITE, R.A.O.U., BELLTREES, N.S.W.

(Published in “Bulletin No. 2” of the R.A.O.U., 21/2/11.)

CRATICUS MENTALIS (Black-backed Butcher-Bird).—Clutch, two eggs, much incubated, taken at Lockerbie, Cape York, North Queensland, by H. G. Barnard, 1/12/10. Nest composed of sticks and lined with strong grass-roots, placed in the fork of a “bloodwood” (eucalypt) tree growing in hilly, stony country.

Shape of eggs, round oval; shell fine, surface glossy. Ground colour greenish-grey, one specimen being of a darker shade; sparingly marked over the greater portion of the shell with spots of reddish-brown, which, with splashes of light slate, form an irregular ring near the larger end of the egg. Dimensions in inches:—(a) 1.06 x .8, (b) 1.05 x .8.

XANTHOTIS FILIGERA (Streak-naped Honey-eater).—Clutch, two eggs, taken by H. G. Barnard at Lockerbie, Cape York, 18/11/10. Nest composed of strips of bark and fibre, woven together, and lined with fibre; placed in a mango-tree.

Shape of eggs, long oval; shell fine and very glossy. Colour pinkish-white, freckled all over with small spots of bright brownish-red, these spots being thicker towards the larger end, where they are mixed with small splashes of pale purple.

\* *Bull. B.O.C.*, No. clxiv.